



THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

# Reviewing Stand

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## What Does Korea Mean to America?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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# What Does Korea Mean to America?

MR. McBURNEY: Our speakers today are three experts on the Far East; Captain Michael Fielding, author, lecturer and world traveler; William M. McGovern, Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University; and Frederic S. Marquardt, Telegraph Editor of the Chicago *Sun-Times*.

How do you gentlemen size up the Korean situation? Did we make a mistake in committing ourselves in Korea?

CAPT. FIELDING: I think we made a mistake. Not a mistake in that we committed ourselves, but that we went too far. When the North Koreans attacked—quite obviously at the behest of Soviet Russia—we had to respond or lose out completely. We began by sending in our Air Force and then our Navy, and then we added ground troops. I think that the sending of the ground troops was a grave mistake.

MR. McBURNEY: Will you explain why?

## A Trap?

CAPT. FIELDING: I feel that the Russians have lured us into a trap, into an area that is far from advantageous to our particular type of fighting, and where it will be necessary for us to use a large number of troops.

MR. McBURNEY: In other words, you feel that we have gotten ourselves into a difficult situation?

CAPT. FIELDING: A very difficult situation.

MR. McBURNEY: What is your thinking, Marquardt?

MR. MARQUARDT: There is no question about it being a difficult situation. However, your question was whether we made a mistake. I think we had no option. I think we had to commit

ourselves, or lose face. If that had happened, there would be no trust on the part of any of the countries in the Far East, and it would have completely destroyed the United Nations at the same time.

MR. McBURNEY: And you, McGovern?

MR. McGOVERN: I think that we made our initial mistake in withdrawing our troops in 1948 and 1949. In fact, I wrote a paper in 1948 pointing out that if we did withdraw our troops, the Russians would certainly seize Korea. I think that the withdrawing of our troops was a mistake. Our State Department at that time stated that we were not interested in the Far East, and then a few years later announced that we would back the government of South Korea. Once we made the mistake of making ourselves so ridiculous, it was essential that we go back into Korea.

## 'Ground Troops Necessary'

I disagree with Captain Fielding in several respects. First, in the commitments of air and sea forces, they alone would not be sufficient. You have to have ground troops with the air and sea forces. We would most certainly have been licked with only air and sea forces.

Secondly, Korea is very important strategically. The control of Eastern Asia, whether it remains free or goes under Soviet tutelage depends on whether we are or are not successful in Korea.

CAPT. FIELDING: When we first decided to support the Koreans, we never committed ourselves to reconquer South Korea. We decided to give whatever support we could in the battle against the North Koreans, and to that extent, our face was involved. By sending in the Navy and Air Force, I think we would have done enough to salvage

American face in Korea. It is perfectly true that the air and sea forces could not have saved Korea alone. To my mind, Korea is not as strategic as Mr. McGovern seems to think.

In this global warfare with Soviet Russia, we are going to be behind the eight-ball in manpower. We cannot hope to match the Russians in manpower. If we commit our manpower to remote areas all over the world, the Russians are going to pin us down at some point that will catch us completely off balance.

MR. McGOVERN: I think that the question of commitment is singular. We either do or do not. If we are going to make a small commitment and then pull out, it is not as good as making no commitment at all. I think history will bear me out on that.

MR. MARQUARDT: I agree on the question of our commitment. Either we commit ourselves, or we do not.

MR. McBURNEY: Can we win in Korea? Is our position in Korea tenable?

#### 'Prestige at Stake'

MR. McGOVERN: I agree with Marquardt here. I think it is silly to use our air and sea forces unless we are willing to use the ground forces. It is a position of either winning or pulling out. I think we are in a position where we must win. American prestige in the whole world will depend on our success or failure in Korea. I think we can win. It is going to be very difficult going, but we can win. We have air and sea supremacy, and when we get more troops and materiel we can push back.

CAPT. FIELDING: In the long run, I agree with you that we have to go ahead now. Quite obviously, inasmuch as the initial steps have been taken, we must follow through. But, I don't think that our face has been enhanced by what has happened and is happening in Korea. I feel sure in the long run we can win out, but it is going to be a costly operation, and it means six to eight divisions being

used, and where are we going to get these troops?

MR. MARQUARDT: We are committing six to eight divisions to win, and drive the Russians to wherever we want them to go at that time. There is more involved in this than the United States. It is a United Nations action. When Captain Fielding made the statement that we could not meet the enemy on manpower, I would like to point out that there are more people in the free world than in the total area bounded by the iron curtain.

CAPT. FIELDING: That is true, but it does happen to be a very unhappy fact that the Russians are able to get their stooges to fight for them, and we cannot get anyone to fight for us. We have to commit our own manpower. We cannot get the local people of a country to fight for us.

MR. MARQUARDT: I think you are extending the local situation all over the world. I think the English, the French and the Dutch will fight for us. I think these lands will pledge troops as well as Turkey and Brazil and others. It is not a completely American show, although it has been largely such up to now.

#### 'An Important Lesson'

MR. McGOVERN: We have learned a lesson, and a very important lesson in Korea. We Americans were getting too soft, getting along too well. We thought we could use a half-division to stop this North Korean action. We made the same mistake in 1941 when we had Pearl Harbor. We always start out underestimating the enemy, and then go to the other extreme and overestimate him. I remember the military officers saying that the Japanese could not fly and that their ships would wallow like corks. I have heard them say that a battalion would lick the North Koreans. The Russians have been training the Koreans for a long time. Long before the war they have trained Koreans in Siberia. Since 1945 they have been active in the training of the North Korean Army,

and we only had a police force in South Korea.

The main thing is whether we have to commit eight divisions in Korea. Of course we *may* have to have ten divisions to reconquer, but we have been able to hold Japan, a major and much larger country, with only four divisions. I doubt that we will require six or eight divisions in Korea.

MR. MCBURNEY: If we knew that North Korea was preparing for war, why did we not prepare?

MR. McGOVERN: I am coming to that point. May I again point out that I pounded at that point in 1948 in the withdrawal of our troops. Many of our military leaders thought we were making a mistake. I think it was a political mistake.

### Military Assistance

CAPT. FIELDING: Last year I gave a talk in a series of lectures "Red Shadows over Asia" in which I pointed out the great error, our failure actually to intervene in China when Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Government were being beaten. We pulled out and decided not to risk our manpower in China. It was obvious that there would be a point where we would have to decide on a stand, and that is Korea.

Now, as to the French, the English and the Dutch as Mr. Marquardt pointed out, these countries cannot furnish adequate numbers of troops for our disposal. They are hamstrung. They have troops pinned down all over the world. They are spread out. All of that has been necessary, but none of them is fighting Russians.

MR. MARQUARDT: I think your point is a tenable one. This is not World War III. It is merely a police action in Korea, and we will be able to handle the situation without the terrific manpower you think is necessary. I would like to get on to the question of military position. Can we win? I think we can! The problems thereafter will have to be solved when they come up. The position we are in in Korea is a situation born in Wash-

ington, and that was the withdrawal from the Far East of our troops. I think that was wrong, and I did think so then. We are now forced to go back in at a relatively great cost of money and manpower.

MR. McGOVERN: I thoroughly agree. That was one of our greatest mistakes, to withdraw from the Far East. We announced that we were not interested in it. We announced that we were waiting for the dust to settle in China. Therefore, we seem to be surprised when the trouble happens only a year later. The Russians knew this, and I am perfectly convinced that the Russians thought they could move in without any trouble. Russia is not ready for World War III. This trouble may develop into World War III if we lose out in Korea, and so convince Russia that we are weak and totally unprepared.

CAPT. FIELDING: Whether or not we were wise in committing our ground troops in South Korea is whether our commitment came as a surprise to Russia or whether they welcomed it. I think it is a trap laid by Russia and there is very definite evidence to substantiate that conviction.

MR. MCBURNEY: Give us that evidence.

### 'Russian Strategy'

CAPT. FIELDING: Here are four points. In the first place, if the North Koreans had merely gone out to destroy the South Koreans, it would not have had to be brazen aggression. It could have been a civil war. But, they planned it as a challenge to us.

Second, the North Koreans certainly knowing the strength of the South Koreans did not have to go out in the force they did. A fraction of it could have destroyed South Korea. The force in which they attacked alone shows definitely that they were ready to meet the American forces on more than even terms.

Third, the North Korean advance was spearheaded by tanks. You do not send tanks into battle in Korea during the monsoon season. It is the worst

possible weather for tanks, unless they anticipated the air attack from Americans, then the rain and poor visibility would be protection.

Fourth, three days, or approximately three days, after the North Koreans attacked, the South Korean Army was completely disrupted. They were completely through. They could then have taken all of Korea and met with no serious resistance. But they did not do it. They held up for some mysterious reason and did not advance for a full week, and then after American ground forces had been committed.

If this does not show it to be a trap, I want to know why.

### 'Hoped for Unification'

MR. MARQUARDT: I disagree thoroughly that this was a trap. Politically, the Russians prepared the North for a war, and we did not prepare the South. The reason we did not was because the Rhee government said they were ready to invade North Korea, and we did not give the tanks and supplies that were actually needed. We had gone along hoping to unify Korea according to the Potsdam agreement. The Russians went ahead and prepared for war. I think that the Russians could not have taken South Korea as you indicate. If the Russians could have taken South Korea I believe that they would have done it.

As for civil war, the Russians had a school in South Korea to train men for sabotage and to pull revolutions. Many such revolutions were started. Many bloody revolutions were begun, but the Rhee government was strong enough to put them down. They repeatedly tried to upset the government, but all attempts failed without intervention from North Korea.

CAPT. FIELDING: But I said that the strength of the attack indicated expected American intervention; it need not have been so strong.

MR. McGOVERN: I think every military man wants odds of fifty-to-one if he can get them.

MR. MARQUARDT: To a military man,

the higher the odds in his favor the better he likes it.

### 'Impress People of Asia'

MR. McGOVERN: You want to have the surprise punch and the force. They are trying to impress, with force and power and with tanks and guns, the people of Asia and they are trying to strike terror into their hearts. They are trying to impress the people of the Far East and of Europe. I am thoroughly convinced that the Russians did not expect us to attack. In the Russian world campaign they want to take the weakest with as little resistance as possible. They want to go up to a point short of World War III. Now, they thought that when we said we were not interested in Korea and we specifically ordered General MacArthur not to make preparations to defend Korea, Russia thought they could get in with very little resistance and gain that prestige.

MR. MCBURNEY: Was there a time when our State Department made the statement that Korea was not important?

MR. McGOVERN: Certainly.

CAPT. FIELDING: Definitely.

MR. MCBURNEY: Why did they make such a statement?

MR. McGOVERN: Because we did not realize our position in the Far East, our position in Korea and Formosa. It was the policy of the Washington people that was changed from a year or a year and a half ago.

MR. MARQUARDT: The United States has held the same strategy in the Cold War that they did in World War II; Europe first and Asia second.

MR. MCBURNEY: You say Korea is politically or psychologically important, Mr. McGovern? Fielding says that it is not important strategically.

CAPT. FIELDING: I agree that since we are committed, we have to win because a defeat will go bad for us. I think that we made our mistake earlier in sending in our ground forces.

MR. McGOVERN: Either a full commitment or no commitment at all is my feeling. If we are interested in holding Japan as a pro-democratic sympathizer, then Korea is important from a political point of view. Japan has always felt in a sense that Korea is a dagger thrust at the heart of Japan. If the Russians control Korea, the Japanese would be forced to go along with Russia—to hop on the bandwagon—and go inside the Iron Curtain. So, I believe it is important both psychologically and politically.

CAPT. FIELDING: If we commit ourselves fully to every remote area of the world where the Russians may decide to make trouble, we will spread our force so thin that we will not be able to meet Russia when the chips are down. I think that is the strategy Russia is employing. When they hit us, for instance, in Germany we are not going to be able to stop them.

MR. MCBURNEY: Where are these "remote areas" you mentioned?

### Remote Areas

CAPT. FIELDING: I have made a list of nine areas. There are six of these that I call likely and three that are less likely. Of the six, Formosa, Tibet, Burma, Indo-China and Germany are likely; and Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia are less likely. I agree with McGovern and Marquardt that the Russians are not willing to make this a World War at the present time. I know that if they use their own troops, we will go to war to prevent them. They are only going to strike us in areas when they can strike at us with stooge forces. Those that I have listed are the places they can do that.

MR. MARQUARDT: You say we made a mistake in committing ourselves in Korea. Would it be a mistake then to commit ourselves in the places you have named?

CAPT. FIELDING: No, I contend, for instance, that Formosa is a very strategic area. Indo-China, for instance, is a hinge on which Southeast

Asia and Turkey depend. The others are listed for similar reasons.

MR. MARQUARDT: Korea was the one hot-spot that you were ready to wipe off, but you are ready to fight for the others?

CAPT. FIELDING: Yes.

### 'Korea Base Vital'

MR. McGOVERN: I think that is a question of strategy. I think, actually, Korea is a more crucial spot than French Indo-China. In other words, if we went into Korea, first of all we have secured our base on the Continent and have rendered Japan safe. If we do win in Korea, we will then have a force in power on the Continent of Asia and one with which we can cut the life line of Russia's Asia supplies through Manchuria. Everything to Asia from Russia must come over the Manchurian Railroad. Therefore, from the strictly military point of view, and leaving out politics, an American base in Korea is vital. In Indo-China you have a more difficult situation because of France and other countries and the friction created.

CAPT. FIELDING: In the last war the Japanese proved one thing, that their conquest of French Indo-China sealed the fate of all Southeast Asia. Now, I think that is more important than Korea. If they get French Indo-China, they get all of Southeast Asia.

MR. MARQUARDT: If we had made a stand in Korea, would we have the right to expect the support of these other countries? We would have killed the United Nations, and we have no option now other than to win.

CAPT. FIELDING: I agree that we have no other option now.

MR. McGOVERN: I wanted to say that when we win or lose in Korea, we have won or lost that part of Asia.

CAPT. FIELDING: I hope you are right about that because today in the papers, I noticed that the North Chinese Communists already have their men in Indo-China, and I do not think the winning of Korea will stop that.

MR. McBURNEY: What do we have to do to win?

MR. McGOVERN: We simply did not prepare in time. Our weapons were not what they should have been. Our anti-tank guns were not adequate. We now have a new and larger one. I am very glad that this Korean situation took place in spite of the grim cost. It made America wake up to the inadequacy of its preparedness, and

it persuaded a large number of Americans that Korea is only a small part of the Russian world-wide aggression.

Many Americans who have put away the idea that Russia is out for world domination now have come to believe that it is a fact. There are those people who now will not stand in the way of the democracies siding against Communism to stop its enveloping movements.



## Suggested Readings

Compiled by Barbara Wynn,  
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University



CHUNG, HENRY. *The Russians Came to Korea*. Washington, D. C. Korea Pacific Press, 1947.

Describes conditions in Korea two years after "liberation." States that the fate of democracy in the Orient is dependent upon America's success or failure in Korea.

LASKER, BRUNO, ed. *New Forces in Asia*. (The Reference Shelf, Vol. 21, No. 6). New York, Wilson, 1950.

A discussion of America's stakes in the Far East. Includes several articles on Korea.

GAYN, MARK. *Japan Diary*. New York, William Sloane, 1948.

Contains some excellent on-the-spot reporting of conditions in Korea. Maintains that fear of Communism and not the desire for reform has formed the basis of U. S. policy in Korea.

HARRINGTON, FRED HARVEY. *God, Mammon, and the Japanese; Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905*. Madison, Wis., The University of Wisconsin Press, 1944.

A "scholarly study of American relations with Korea."

Korean American Cultural Association, Inc. *The Culture of Korea, Edited by Changsoon Kim*. Honolulu, The Association, 1945.

"Racial background, sketch of geography, history of Korea, religion, literature, art, science, etc."

McCUNE, GEORGE M. *Korea Today; with the Collaboration of Arthur L. Grey, Jr.* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950.

Study of the contrasts existing between North and South Korea.

United States. Department of State. *Korea, 1945 to 1948*. Washington, D. C. (Far Eastern Series 28). Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1948.

A "report on political developments and economic resources with selected documents."

*Amerasia* 11:55-61, F., '47. "Land Reform in North Korea." H. TRALIM.

Contains the text of the land reform decree of March 5, 1946, and of the regulations for its enforcement.

*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 255:152-5, Ja., '48. "Occupation Policies in Japan and Korea." H. BORTON.

Traces the history of Korea from the time of the surrender of the Japanese forces in the Far East.

*Contemporary Review* 177:350-4, Je., '50. "Korea." G. FITZGERALD-LEE.

A descriptive article on the country and its people.

*Far Eastern Survey* 17:17-18, Ja. 28, '48. "Land Redistribution in Korea." S. McCUNE.

Contrasts the land redistribution programs in the Russian and American zones.

*Far Eastern Survey* 18:77-80, Ap. 6, '49. "United States Rule in Korea." CHANNING LIEM.

A discussion of the results of the occupation as they appeared to Koreans of moderate views.

*Foreign Policy Bulletin* 29:1-2, Jl. 14, '50. "Can U. S. Quarantine Korean Conflict?"

Contends that the U. S. can eventually oust the North Koreans from the areas gained, but points out that the big problem is keeping the conflict within its present Korean boundaries.

*Journal of Politics* 9:605-23, N., '47. "Post War Government and Politics of Korea." G. M. McCUNE.

A detailed study, with historical background, of the American and Soviet zones of occupation.

*Nation* 166:569-71, My. 22, '48. "Blunder in Korea." M. E. STEWART.

A 1948 report on how the United States let Russia "win the game" in Korea.

*Nation* 171:73-74, Jl. 22, '50. "Caught Short on Korea." JAMES F. MINIFIE.

Declares that America was caught off guard in Korea, militarily, economically, and from a propaganda viewpoint.

*Nation* 171:23-25, Jl. 8, '59. "Gamble in Korea."

Discusses the only way of "selling" the American-United Nations intervention in Korea to the peoples of Asia.

*New Republic* 123:13-15, Jl. 10, '50. "Improvisation in Korea." WILLIAM COSTELLO.

Points out that if our policy of containment is to be successful, we cannot permit another "hot spot" like Korea.

*New Republic* 123:5-6, Jl. 3, '50. "Korea: Final Test of the U. N."

Attempts to answer such questions as "who began the fighting, does the U.S.S.R. want a full-scale war with the West, will the fate of Korea be vital for developments in Southeast Asia?"

*Pacific Affairs* 22:53-9, Mr., '49. "Soviet Press Views North Korea." J. N. WASHBURN.

A study based on Soviet press sources.

*United Nations World* 2:18-21, My., '48. "How It Feels to be a Korean in Korea." YOUNGHILL KANG.

Maintains that the real tragedy in the South was that the middle-rovers were driven underground with the Communists.

*United States Department of State Bulletin* 23:3-8, Jl. 3, '50. "North Korean Forces Invade South Korea."

Includes statements by President Truman and Secretary Acheson, and texts of the Security Council Resolutions.

*World Today* 5:243-50, Je., '49. "Competing Ideologies in Korea."

Asserts that the Korean situation refutes the Communist theory of an American imperialist conspiracy, since American policy in Korea was so obviously marked by planless improvisation.

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